Resolutions on Matters of General Public Interest.

5. Remunerative enterprises by Village Panchayats (*cont.*)

Mr. A. Sankara Poduval.—Sir, I rise to support this motion. At the outset, I may say that the Panchayats were started to improve our civic life. The usefulness of village Panchayats, hitherto, has not been great. On a previous occasion I had to bring to the notice of the House that the Village Panchayats maybe made more useful by the Government, conferring more powers on them. The idea of starting remunerative ent rprises is highly commendable. In Western countries fairs are arranged, shows and markets held by institutions of this description. Even in the matter of agricaltural improvement, the Village Panchayats can form useful associations wherein experts may be requisitioned to administer to the needs of particular areas and educate ryots as to how cultivation should be carried on, what sort of seed has to be selected, and how all agricultural operations in general could be improved. These are ways in which the Village Panchayats could be made to function according to the spirit of the Regulation and I believe that this is a move in the right direction. Without going further into the details of the Motion I believe that the spirit of it ought to comm nd itself to the House.

Mr. A. Eachara Menon.—Sir, that the Panchayats should be independent is a laudable object. Every institution should be independent. But the proposer of the proposition had said that to make it independent, the Government should induce and encourage Village Panchayats to undertake remunerative enterprise to increase their financial position. As an example he said that the markets may be handed over to them and that they may be asked to open markets and farm out the markets and take whatever amount that can be got out of it. And the Member for Trichur just now said that one of the functions will be to select the seeds, etc. I fear these two members have entirely forgotten about the qualifications of the Panchayatdars. They are here in the town and they want everything for the town. They do not know who are the Panchayatdars. How many Panchayats are there in which persons will be able to select the seeds and to give advice on cultivation? I do not know. It is true that there are Administration Reports saying that we have 60 Panchayats or so and they are doing very properly. These are all for the outsiders and this resolution that these Panchayats may become self supporting units of self-Government, aswell, is for the outside public. Very good words these are. But what is obtained in the Panchayats, only those

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who have seen the Panchayats working can understand. What the Government ought to do is to put a little more attention to see that the Panchayats are working properly. Now what we want is, to see them working properly. The Panchayats are given criminal and civil jurisdiction.

Mr. P. V. Raphael.—No criminal jurisdiction.

Mr. A. Eachara Menon.—There was, but now there is only civil jurisdiction. I am sorry to say that these Panchayatdars are fighting each other. What we want now is that Government should see that they are working properly and discharging the functions they have been entrusted with. That is alone that they need do now. If you give them the power to raise tax I am sure there will be a hue and cry in all Panchayats. Further if you give the power to raise the tax, they will be something like minor Municipalities without the advantages of the Municipalities. There had been a provision in the Panchayat Regulation to raise taxes also, but that was not given effect to. They should not be allowed to raise taxes before they have proved their competency for the same. The only thing the Government should see at present is that the Panchayats are working properly.

Mr. Joseph Pettah.—Sir, I am one of those who desire to see the development of Panchayats, one that desires very much to see that they are entrusted with more powers and functions. At the same time, I fear that the Panchayats that we have, are and will be for many years to come, not in a position to undertake remunerative works. They can do more of services. Remunerative work is a work which brings a surplus profit to the Panchayats. Reference was made here to the appointment of experts to give advice in the matter of seeds selection, soil and such other things. That surely is a service done to the people of the villages, but how it is a remunerative function of the Panchayat, I fail to see. A remunerative function may be such as the running of a shop, or the running of a service which would bring profit to the Panchayat. Such alone, I think, are remunerative functions. I think that is also the meaning given to remunerative function by the Hon'ble Mover of this Resolution. There are, I believe, many more stages for the Panchayats to traverse, before they can reach the ultimate goal of undertaking remunerative services. They are yet in an elementary condition. If at all we want to make a beginning in the matter of remunerative services by local bodies, I think the beginning has to be made in the Municipalities. We have not yet made much of a beginning even there, because we find even the Municipalities are not properly qualified as yet, to undertake remunerative

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functions of an industrial, or commercial nature. In the West we find, in various countries, Municipalities undertaking very many remunerative functions, but no villages doing similar work. Perhaps, there may be some rare exceptions. But in general, we do not find many Panchayats undertaking functions of a remunerative character. First, we have to improve the constitution of the Panchayats, and secondly, we have to give the village folk more of training, more of responsibility in financial and other matters by making them undertake various services of rural welfare. And then, after having gained some valuable experience in these lines, perhaps at a distant date, they may be in a fit position to undertake works of a remunerative character. Therefore, I submit it is as yet premature to ask our Panchayats to undertake works of a remunerative character. Once again I repeat that I am one who would like very much to see that there is more of local self-Government in the State and that the Panchayats are restored to their ancient status.

In ancient India these Panchayats were doing many functions, but not of a remunerative character.

I went through certian accounts of the working of the Panchayats in Ancient India and I found that there were not many cases—nay, not even a single case, so far as my reading went—of Panchayats in those days undertaking remunerative functions. But they were rendering many services to the villages. Now if their functions are to be increased, functions calculated to render more services to the people, I have no quarrel with the proposal and I shall be the first to support it. But if our Panchayats are to be entrusted with remunerative works, once again I would say it is premature. Therefore, I am constrained to oppose this resolution.

Dr. A.R. Menon.—I only want to make a few observations. There is no such thing as village. Village means a number of houses situated within a certain radius. But here village is a unit only for collecting the revenue. The underlying principle is to have cottage industries, for example in Cheruviruthi, if we want to see a house, we have to walk for 3 miles. Therefore the whole position is absurd, excepting that the resolution is sonorously worded, beautifully sentenced and well-balanced. (*Laughter.*) That is the result of copying from other places. The person must unserstand that there is no such thing as village.

President.—Order, order. No personal attack can be allowed.

Dr. A. R. Menon.—I never intended it as a personal attack. I had been pointing out the mistakes of the mover in

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bringing forward the resolution, in this form. Therefore, with due submission to the Chair, I think I am in order.

And the second point is, it requires public spirit. In order to see the public spirit we have only to see the empty benches here. Our people whatever may be their merits, have not yet understood what public life is. The question asked is, "Is it going to do any good to me"? It is only when they render service, when you are ready to render service, the paraphernalia of these Panchayats and Municipalities and things like that, will be of any use. Our people do not understand properly what public life is. Therefore, any resolution passed by this House will not be of any use. For these reasons I oppose this resolution.

Mr. P. V. Raphael.—Sir, after the lucid speech of the Leader of the House explaining the Government position on this resolution and the various speeches of the Hon'ble non-Official members, I feel my task is very much lightened and I have only very few supplementary remarks to offer.

The ideal contemplated in the resolution is a highly desirable one, as it aims at making these village institutions stand on their own legs and as it attempts to relieve the Central Government of the liberal subventions they now give to these institutions. Particularly so, at this juncture; when the Central Government is perhaps faced by financial difficulties on account of the prevailing depression and when the demands of the villagers are every day on the increase, the achievement of the objects aimed at in this resolution would indeed be very welcome if they could be attained at all.

It is to be regretted however that, as far as one can foresee, there is little chance for many years to come of our Panchayats being so developed as to undertake works of a remunerative character calculated to make them self-supporting. The successful undertaking of an industrial or commercial enterprice of a remunerative character implies economic initiative persistent application, continuity of policy, business foresight and such other qualities which could ordinarily be expected only of highly organized bodies of a permanent or a semi-permanent nature with well-established business traditions behind them. I am constrained to remark that all our Panchayats do not possess these essential qualities to the required degree. There is also the vital question of funds wherewith to finance these enterprises. Even with what little subsidy the Government could give them in this connection, our Panchayats may find it difficult to find the necessary funds. Beyond all this, there is the other question, how far it would be advisable for Village Panchayats, backed by the Government with at least a moral support behind

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them, to enter into open competition with remunerative enterprises, if any, that may be existing in the villages. To cite only a few examples, how far the Trikkur Tile works would cherish the idea of the Trikkur Panchayat with subsidies from Government, starting a Tile factory of their own, or the Edavilangu Panchayat starting a Mat Factory to oust the Edavilangu villagers of their mat trade, or the Edavanakad Panchayat starting a prawn factory to capture for themselves the prawn industry of the place and so on, and so on requires no comment from me. These are all difficulties which have to be weighed and examined well by this House before the objects aimed at in this resolution are accepted by it.

The past history of Village Panchayats also is not very much in favour ofthe acceptance of this resolution. Ancient India is considered to be the birth place of this unit of self-Government and as we go further and further backwards, into the history of Ancient India, the system of Village Panchayats is seen flourishing more and more. And as pointed out by the Hon'ble Member for Adur, we find the Village Panchayats of Ancient India performing a variety of services, such as the supervision of irrigation, distribution of charity, feeding of travellers, village entertainments, etc., etc. There is, however, little trace of any one of them having undertaken works of a remunerative character. Considerations of the past also should therefore make us nervous in attempting to assign to our Village Panchayats the undertaking of works of a remunerative character. Mahatma Gandhi, that great believer in the potentialities and possibilities of the Village Panchayats assigns to these institutions, the following functions, among others:—

"Every Panchayat will be expected to attend to the education of boys and girls in the village, its sanitation, its medical needs, the up-keep and cleanliness of the village wells and ponds and the uplift of and the daily wants of the so called untouchables" So far as I have been able to see, he also is not seen assigning to these institutions the undertaking of works of a remunerative nature to make them self-supporting.

If anything has to be tried in this direction, a beginning may perhaps be made in some of the Municipalities of the State, as remarked by the Hon'ble Member for Adur, and by some others also, where the environment is surely more congenial to the development of such enterprises. Examples of such Municipal enterprises may be found in Western countries, more particularly in Prussia, where there are Municipal Tramway, gas and electric works, fisheries, bakeries, theatres, mills, factories, etc , etc.

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Possibly our villages also may at some distant future be in a position to undertake some of these functions. I am at one with the mover of the resolution that such a day may soon come for our Panchayats. But it is evident that they have to traverse many steps of responsible financial administration before they could ever think of reaching that coveted ideal. A first step in this direction would be to allow them to impose certain local rates and taxes so that they may gain valuable experience in handling these resources. To encourage them in this particular direction, it may be very desirable if the Government would hold out substantial subsidies in some proportion to their local collection. But it is to be noted that even such a proposal of local taxation, when it was made a decade ago, in the Panchayat conference held at Trichur, was found to be opposed to the general sentiments of the public at large. It is to be feared that in these days of depression the popular sentiment in this direction could not be anything different from what it was then. Even the half contribution contemplated in the Panchayat rules for remunerative irrigation work is seldom forthcoming from most of the villages. Government may, however, be only too willing to introduce some sort of local rates and taxes in the Panchayats as suggested by the Hon'ble mover in the course of his opening speech and the Government believe that this move will have the support of this House.

To say the least of it, therefore, the idea though a highly desirable one, seems to be far ahead of local conditions obtaining at present in the State. It does not appear to be supported by the practice obtaining in British India or in Western countries and does not also appear to be in consonance with the ideal of the Village Panchayats as they existed in a very flourishing condition in Ancient India. The facts are these and on these facts the question has to be decided. If, however, any Panchayat brings to the notice of the Government the desirability of starting any remunerative enterprise, with the necessary funds collected by themselves, Government will be only too willing to investigate the question and do the needful. The resolution as it stands is quite unworkable and I regret to have to state that it cannot therefore be accepted.

Mr. P. Krishna Menon.—Sir, before offering my remarks upon some of the criticisms, I should like to disabuse the minds of some of the members who seem to have misconceived my resolution and laid a charge against me that I have not understood myself. The Hon'ble Member for Cheruthuruthi said that what was contemplated by the name village does not practically exist in the whole of Cochin, as his experience has

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shown him at Cheruthuruthi, because he has to walk 3 miles there to find a house, which he himself admitted. I never said anything nor does my resolution refer to any village. But it is only to the Village Panchayats which has been established by law and which is working. Therefore his definition of a village does not in any way militate against my resolution.

The second, I am afraid, was unfortunately due to a slip of the tongue, as it were, which was committed by the Hon'ble the Revenue Member. Because in the course of his very interesting and encouraging speech he used the word 'cess'. Then right up from the north, from Tiruvilluamala, southwards, the people got afraid aud they said they were going to be taxed if my resolution is to be carried. The house will see that there is not a single word about taxation or additional taxation so far as my resolution is concerned. I have carefully worded the resolution by saying that Government may take steps to induce and encourage the Village Panchayats to undertake remunerative enterprises. Now there is no meaning in saying that the Government will have to give subsidies and create competition in industries in the local areas. I never said that competitive enterprises should be undertaken. I never meant that. I never said that the Edavilangu factory or the Edavanakad factory should be made to suffer. Whatever that may be it is not at all my idea. It is for the resuscitation as it were, if possible, of village industries which could be encouraged and induced upon by the Government if my resolution can be accepted. Now I find, of course it is a regretable fact—that after 15 or 16 years of Panchayat administration that the Panchayats are not working properly.

Mr. P. V. Raphael.—I never said that they are not working properly.

Mr. P. Krishna Menon.—That they are not up to the mark.

Mr. P. V. Raphael.—Even that statement, I have not said. I only said that there are certain very high qualities, such as the power of organization, which is required to start the enterprises and that it is not seen in the Panchayats to a very high degree.

Mr. P. Krishna Menon.—That is for so many high enterprises to be taken. I never meant that. Why not you begin from the last rung of the ladder, and try to induce them to undertake simple things and if by experience you find them improving you can rise still higher. By all means then do it. I said markets. Why not hold occasional cattle markets and if possible permanent markets also.

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Mr. K. G. Nayar.—Is that a remunerative enterprise?

Mr. A. Eachara Menon.—What about industry ?

Mr. P. Krishna Menon.—I never said that word. In my resolution, it is said only remunerative enterprises. I never used the word industry.

Mr. P. V. Raphael.—By the word enterprise, it is naturally understood to mean any industrial or commercial enterprise.

Mr. P. Krishna Menon.—Well, I am sorry for that understanding. What I meant and what my words mean are not industries, but remunerative enterprises. Therefore to give a concrete example, why not open a market ? Therefore my submission is that the misconception altogether of my proposition has raised all these criticisms. I am glad to find that the principle is accepted, but the only fear is that we have to wait for a very very long time before the Panchayats are fit to undertake things. That is the very reason why I request that a beginning might be made. How long are we to remain without making a beginning? No doubt there is the old saying that no one can learn to swim without gulping a few mouthfuls of water. I do not deny that a few mistakes may be committed by some Panchayats. Why are responsible officers employed ? Why not they watch and why do they not regulate and get the opinion of the Panchayats and ask them whether they are willing to do it, if they put forward feasible schemes before the Government. I do not see why the Government should wait for ever and ever.

Mr. P. V. Raphael.—That is what I have stated, that if any one is coming with the necessary funds at their disposal, the Government will certainly consider it.

Mr. P. Krishna Menon.—I shall be perfectly satisfied if the Panchayats are circularised and asked whether they are willing or ready to have such enterprises. They may be asked to put schemes before the Government and if only the Government approves of the thing, anything can be done. If I am to understand that they are willing to make the necessary enquiry to the Panchayat I shall be only too glad to withdraw the proposition.

Deputy President.—Do you then withdraw the Resolution ?

Mr. P. Krishna Menon.—On the assurance of the Government that they will circularise or get the opinion of the Panchayats, I may withdraw

Deputy President.—The Government have expressed their opinion and if you are satisfied with that opinion you may

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withdraw. I cannot now ask the Government Member to make any further reply.

Mr. P. Krishna Menon.—I am satisfied with the opinion.

Deputy President.—Then do you withdraw the resolution?

Mr. P. Krishna Menon.—I do.

The resolution was, with the leave of the House, withdrawn.

Mr. P. S. Keswan Nambudiri being absent the resolution standing in his name was considered withdrawn.

6. മിസ്റ്റർ പി. എസ്സ്. കേശവൻനമ്പൂതിരി.—തൃശ്ശിവപേരൂർ താലൂക്കിലെ കോൾനിലങ്ങളിൽ കൂട്ടാടൻ കൃഷിചെയ്യുന്നതിനെ പ്രോത്സാഹിപ്പിപ്പാൻവേണ്ടി പുഞ്ചകൃഷി ചെയ്തുവരുന്ന നിലങ്ങളിൽ കൂട്ടാടൻ പണി ചെയ്യുന്നതായാൽ അതുകളുടെ അക്കൊല്ലത്തെ നികുതി കൂട്ടാടൻ കൊയ്ത്തുകാലത്തേക്കുമാറ്റി കൊടുക്കേണ്ടതാണെന്നും ഈ സഭ ഗവർമ്മെണ്ടിനോടു ശുപാർശി ചെയ്യുന്നു.

Deputy President.—The next resolution stands in the name of Mr. P. Kumaran Ezhuthassan :—

Mr. P. Kumaran Ezhuthassan.—I do not move it.

Hence the following resolution was considered withdrawn.

7. Mr. P. Kumaran Ezhuthassan.—"*This Council recommends to the Government to reserve 50 per cent of the posts in the Lower Secondary Department of the State Educational Service to undergraduate teachers of approved service and stop the appointment of graduates to the said Department till the above percentage is reached*".

8. College extension Scheme.

Mr. E. Ikkanda Warriar.—Sir, I rise to move, "that this Council recommends to the Government to defer spending any money on the Ernakulam College extension scheme, until a comprehensive and detailed estimate and cost of the whole scheme is prepared".

I may at the very outset say that my object is not to place any impediment in the progress of the work at Ernakulam. I am not foolish enough to think that I can by means of this resolution stop the hands of the Government. But I really want to know what the actual cost of the Ernakulam College Extension Scheme is, in the interests of that scheme itself. I wanted the Government to have a comprehensive and detailed estimate of the whole scheme showing the ultimate cost. I sent a series of questions on it. The Government were pleased to say that the preparation of the estimates and the cost reports are only in progress. My position is that the public of Cochin is entitled to know what the Government is going to spend on such a big scheme as this. Apart from that, in the interest of the very scheme itself, I beg to submit that it is highly desirable that we should know what the ultimate expenditure of it will be,

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